



[Ray Alexander, 1913-2004](#)

Theory and Practice

What was happening in the six years between the “Black Republic Thesis” of 1928 and Moses Kotane’s “Cradock Letter” of 1934? Why was it necessary for Kotane to ask again in 1934 for things which should have been assured in 1928?

The answer is that the intervening period was a time of terrible sectarianism in the SACP, causing a weakening of the entire liberation struggle.

In the linked, downloadable chapter Jack and Ray (Alexander) Simons tell the story of how the “Black Republic Thesis” was, within two years, perverted into a self-contradictory, mechanical formula by the very same ECCI (Executive

Committee of the Communist International) that had laid down the famous Black Republic Thesis of 1928. This formula proposed at one and the same time a “two-stage revolution” that was to be led exclusively by a “go-it-alone” communist party. The Simons reveal the confused nature of the ECCI’s thinking with the following rhetorical question:

“If there was to be no united action, not even with leaders of Gumede's calibre and not for a programme of immediate demands, why should the party aim at an 'independent native republic', instead of an out-and-out socialist revolution?”

The ECCI’s 1930 memorandum was neither fish nor fowl. It was neither one thing nor the other.

The arrival of two individuals, Wolton and Bach, who played on their connections with the Communist International (CI), triggered, in these circumstances, wave after wave of expulsions and horrible treachery of comrade against comrade. The Simons do not flinch from telling the truth about all this.

As much as it is a terrible story, yet the whole affair revolved around the same fundamental questions that resolved themselves in due course, once again, into a firm theory of National Democratic Revolution.

These are the questions of the relationship between the Vanguard and the Mass, and between the National and Class questions.

The ghosts of the sectarian period still reappear occasionally in holes and corners of our movement, and sometimes burst out with temporary ferocity.

To be fore-warned is to be fore-armed.

In this clear and easy-to-read chapter the Simons did a great service to our movement as a whole.

The picture above is of Ray Alexander Simons: worker, intellectual, trade unionist, leader of women, and communist.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Class and Colour, C19, Theory and Practice, Simons and Simons](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).